Byrd Assails Withholding CIA Material from Hill

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By Joanne Omang
Washington Post Foreign Service

Senate Majority Leader Robert C. Byrd Jr. took issue yesterday with the Carter administration's announced intention to keep Congress in the dark about planned CIA operations.

At his regular weekly news conference, the West Virginia Democrat said he was "puzzled, concerned and disappointed" at CIA Director Stansfield Turner's revelation last week that much advance information has been withheld.

"This does't square with what [Turner] said he would do during his confirmation hearings," Byrd said. Turner told a Senate committee that proposed CIA charter legislation was too restrictive in requiring advance notice to Congress of all "significant" CIA operations.

Turner insisted he had never promised to comply with an advance notice requirement in an earlier Senate resolution, only that he had promised to try to comply.

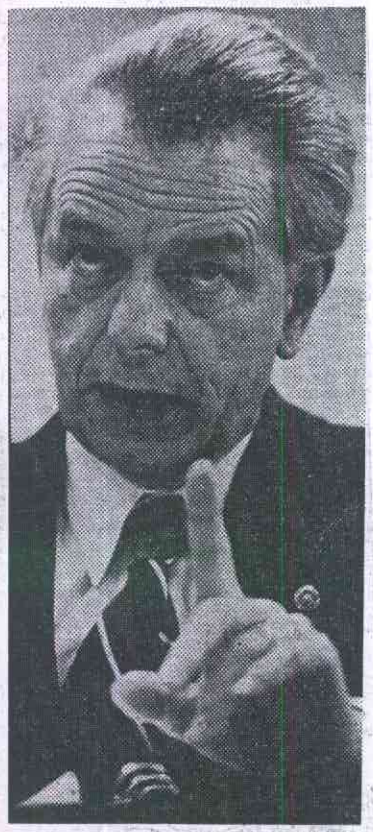
Byrd acknowledged that "too many members of Congress are now in the channel for receiving information" and said the number should be reduced, even though many so-called leaks could be traced to the Pentagon and the Justice Department and not to Congress.

Legislation offered by Sen. Walter D. Huddleston (D-Ky.), Byrd said, would provide a "very reasonable" requirement for advance notification of only House and Senate minority and majority leaders and of the party leaders in the two intelligence oversight committees.

"The CIA should not be given carte blanche," Byrd said. "There must be some accountability."

He complained that he had never been personally informed of any covert CIA actions and thought that he should have been. "If congressional leaders can't be trusted to keep national security secrets . . . we've come to a very bad state of affairs in this country," he said.

Turning to the Abscam controversy, Byrd said he saw no way for Republicans to make political capital out of their quick action in disciplining the lone GOP target, Rep. Richard Kelly (R-Fla.).



SEN. ROBERT C. BYRD
. . . "disappointed" in CIA chief

"This should not be a partisan issue," Byrd said. He pointed out that a Democratic administration had brought the charges against the predominantly Democratic members of congress allegedly involved.

The majority leader continued to offer hope that the windfall profits tax on oil companies might be voted next week. And he said he still hopes for adjournment in October.